

RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER.—ISAIAH I. 18.

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THE following on the "Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the study of the Scriptures," is from the pen of BISHOP HARE, and has ever been considered his most celebrated performance. It is written in the form of a letter to a young clergyman. We give it to our readers, because it faithfully exposes the many barriers which have served to prevent free inquiry in matters of religion. The spirit of Orthodoxy is unmasked, and the operations of bigotry are correctly delineated. It is one of the finest specimens of irony that we have ever seen, and the best, if we except HADLEY'S Dedication to the Pope, which has been erroneously attributed to Sir Richard Steel. The reader will readily discover BISHOP HARE'S object, which he has explicitly avowed in the conclusion, namely, to show the difficulties attending the study of the Scriptures, that they may be removed, so that sincere and honest minds may avow their convictions without hazard and inconvenience. As a few paragraphs in the piece relate only to the state of religion in England many years ago, we have thought proper to leave them out.

ON THE DIFFICULTIES AND DISCOURAGEMENTS, WHICH ATTEND THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

SIR,—I do not wonder at the surprise with which you received, when we were last together, the advice I ventured to give you in relation to the study of the Scriptures. I am, who am a clergyman himself, to seem to dissuade those of his own order from a study that has so many arguments to recommend it; and which, in the opinion of all good men, ought to be their chief business, has I confess, the appearance of a strange paradox, and that of the worst sort. It looks like popery and priestcraft; and therefore young and tender minds may easily be forgiven, if they startle at the first proposal of it; those, especially, who have a just sense of the excellency and inspiration of the Scriptures, and are eagerly bent on the pursuit of such truths, as more immediately tend to the advancement of virtue and religion. As you are of that number, and went into orders with no other view, but that you might the better study the Scriptures yourself, and advance the knowledge of them in the world; it was not to be expected you should presently come into other sentiments. Which I am so far from taking amiss, that I think it to your commendation, that neither the affection nor esteem you so often express for an old friend, could prevail with you to act a part that might have the appearance of levity in a matter of so much consequence. Nor is it less for your credit, that you can retain your opinion, without losing your temper, or showing a backwardness to hear what is to be said against it. Most tempers run into extremes; they are either too volatile to be fixed, or else so fixed, that no force of argument can move them. But it is your happiness, that you can adhere without obstinacy, and change without levity; and therefore I shall think it no trouble to resume the subject, and lay before you, in the best manner I can, the reasons that seem to make against the study of the Scriptures in the way of private judgement; which I hope will not, upon cooler thoughts, appear so strange to you. You will consider they come from one, who is not more a friend to you, than he is to the church; and, if examples be of any weight, I can assure you this side of the

question is by no means destitute of proselytes; and that, when you come to know the world more, you will find this study neglected to a degree you little imagined; but it is reasons, not examples, that will determine you. To come therefore to them;

I shall, in the first place, take leave to ask, *Cui bono?* What good can come of so much pains? For it may seem that a free, serious, impartial, and laborous study of the Scriptures will be of no great service, for the following reasons:

First, Because it is plain the orthodox faith is not founded on a nice and critical knowledge of the Scriptures. Many of the ancient Christians, it will be allowed, were not great critics, but argued very much in a mystical way. Origen in particular, who was the greatest scholar christianity had bred to that time, perpetually turns the letter of Scripture into allegory.—From whence we may reasonably conclude, that the knowledge of the bare literal sense was, in the judgment of many even in those times, thought to be of little use.

Secondly, But it is certain that the original language of the Old Testament was known to very few for the first six centuries, in which those general councils were held, wherein all the articles of the orthodox faith were settled. They governed themselves, and determined all their controverted points by the Greek version; and those who knew Hebrew best, whether they took to the mystical or literal way, had the misfortune to be least orthodox. So it was with Origen, who knew the Scriptures so well, that he had them all by heart. And Eusebius and others, who studied and understood the literal sense of the Scriptures best in the next ages, succeeded little better; so that this study seems to have been of little use to the establishment of the orthodox faith. Now, if an exact and critical knowledge of the Scriptures was not necessary to the settling of the faith, it cannot be necessary to the understanding of it, or to the understanding those who have writ best in the explication and defence of it. On the contrary, such a knowledge tends to lessen our esteem for the Fathers of the church, by discovering their mistakes; and may weaken our regard to the decisions of councils, by exposing the falseness of the ground they seem to be built on. A man, well skilled in the literal sense of the Scriptures, will often find, in the Fathers and councils, texts of Scripture urged very insufficiently; and great stress laid upon passages, which, when critically explained, prove nothing, or perhaps make against them. Which suggests to me a third reason, why it may seem that such a study can do no good.

Thirdly, And that is, because the orthodox faith does not depend upon the Scriptures considered absolutely in themselves, but as explained by catholic tradition. The faith was preserved in creeds, and handed down from one orthodox bishop to another, whose business it was to keep this sacred *deposition* pure and undefiled, and to deliver it to his successor entire as he received it. It was by this tradition the main articles of faith were preserved in the church, and not from any particular study of the Scriptures. The ground therefore of these articles must carefully be distinguished from the scriptures that have been brought in proof of them; these proofs may be weak and inconclusive, but the truth stands independent of them. It is the faith they have received; and, if at any time they argue weakly for it from the scriptures, it is an argument

indeed against their learning, but none against their orthodoxy.

This therefore may seem another good argument to prove, that an exact and careful study of the scriptures is not a safe and profitable study. It is a much safer, as well as a more compendious way to make a man orthodox, to study the tradition of the church.

But you will say, that to send you from scripture to tradition is to turn you out of paradise, the garden of God, into a vast, confused, bewildered wood; and that this is so far from mending the matter, that it is ten times more laborious than the study I would dissuade you from; and so, I confess, it is, if all the ecclesiastical writers were to be carefully read, in order to know the catholic tradition. But that is not my meaning; the substance of catholic tradition lies in much less compass; the established church, you will allow, is orthodox in all necessary points. If therefore you know the sense of the established church, you have in epitome the church catholic; and therefore you need only study her opinions to make you orthodox; and this the most illiterate man may find in the liturgy and articles. This, I trust you will allow, is as short a way, as could be wished, of knowing all that is necessary to be known. A very little time will serve a man to read, in his mother tongue, things which altogether would not fill a moderate volume; and he will be orthodox enough, and have a great deal of time to spare for other studies, that will turn to more account. Besides that, it is of great advantage to go in a way that is safe as well as short; and will lead you into the knowledge of all useful truths, without the hazard of falling into any dangerous opinion.

Fourthly, But if you will insist that it is scripture and not tradition, that the faith is founded on; there is one thing farther I must put you in mind of, which may seem to prove, that a profound and laborious study of the scriptures will not make you at all more orthodox. It is a fundamental principle among protestants, that whatever is necessary to be believed, is plainly and clearly revealed in the scriptures; and consequently what is not plainly and clearly revealed in them, cannot be necessary. Now if what is plain and clear in scripture is the only part that is necessary to be known, then a laborious search into the obscurer parts may seem unnecessary to the obtaining a true orthodox faith. You will say perhaps, that, notwithstanding this declaration of protestants, it may and has been urged against them by their adversaries, they do believe, and maintain as necessary, articles that cannot be proved by plain and clear passages of scripture. This, I confess, has been urged, and may possibly be true of all parties of them, except the established church; but, if it be, it proves only that they are not true to their principle; not that the principle is not in itself true and good. And he surely must be allowed to be the best protestant, who adheres best to the principle on which the Reformation was founded.

Fifthly, Once more; supposing the study of the scriptures as necessary as you please; in the last place, I say, and I am sure the world will say it with me, that they have been sufficiently studied already. And, if any parts remain still obscure, who can hope to clear up passages that have puzzled so many great men? Or will presume in disputable points to set up his private judgment, against them that were men of more learning, of abler parts, of greater application, and better acquainted with the tradition of the church, than any one will now be allowed to be? And (which is the best guide in knowledge of religion) they were moreover men of most exemplary piety, devotion, and humility; of which very little footsteps are to be found in the learned men of our times.

Must not now a man have a strong bent of mind indeed, who cannot, by all these reasons, be dissuaded from giving himself up to a study, that may by many be thought as unprofitable as it is laborious? but will go on, in defiance

of all that has been said to convince him that he wastes himself in vain, and that there will be no fruits of all his labor, but to know he knows nothing? I call that nothing, which will turn to no account.

But, to show you I am disposed to make all possible concessions, I will grant that even this objection might be got over, were this the worst of it; but I have one argument still in reserve, that I am persuaded will be decisive.

(To be continued.)

From the (Boston) Universalist Magazine.

(LETTER 2.)

Bellingham, ———, 1823.

TO THE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

DEAR BRETHREN,—In my last I stated, that I should point out to you what I consider exceptionable in your articles of faith; which I now proceed to do in as tender a manner as the nature of the subject will permit. I commence with the doctrine of the TRINITY; not, however, because I think, in itself considered, it is of any great importance; but because I conscientiously think it is the foundation on which is built the superstructure of vicarious atonement, the infinite evil of sin, total depravity, endless misery, and finally, all the absurdities of orthodoxy. I know very well that it is a hackneyed subject; and that all has been said for and against it, that learning, experience, and ingenuity could invent. I know also that you have very little charity for Unitarians as Christians; and that rejecting the doctrine of the TRINITY, will be sufficient, in your estimation, to brand me, not only with heresy, but infidelity itself. I have not the vanity to think that my views respecting the doctrine in question, are infallibly correct; but this I can say, they have been formed from a careful examination of the sacred writings; and that if the scriptures and my reason lead me astray, there is no remedy; for I will suffer no man to think for me—I will believe nothing implicitly.

I suppose all the arguments by which Trinitarians endeavor to prove that Christ is Jehovah, are grounded on the three following propositions: 1. He is the Creator and preserver of the universe: 2. He is called God by the sacred writers: 3. He is the object of religious worship. The above propositions I shall notice in as brief a manner as possible. 1. He is the Creator, &c. Let me direct your attention to Proverbs viii. 22, to the 30th verse inclusive; where Solomon personifies Wisdom, and makes it speak the following language: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled; before the hills, was I brought forth. While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth. Then was I by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Now turn to St. John's Gospel i. 1, 2, 3, "In the beginning was the Word (or Logos, literally, Wisdom) and the Word (Wisdom) was with God and the Word (Wisdom) was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, (it, Wisdom) and without him (it, Wisdom) was not any thing made that was made." It will not be denied that the Rabbins and Greek Philosophers used the term Logos to designate Wisdom; and it can

make no difference with which it was original, as they used it in the same sense. Now observe, Solomon makes Wisdom say: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning;" and St. John says; "In the beginning was the Word" (Wisdom.) Judge ye: Is it possible to avoid the conclusion that Solomon and St. John speak of the same thing; and that it is simply an attribute of the Deity of which they speak; instead of being a 2d person in a TRINITY of Gods. The apostle says, "In him (Christ) dwell all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Wisdom being that attribute of the Deity by which he created and rules the universe, and by which the work of reconciliation was commenced, is going on, and will finally be consummated, is very properly called the fullness of the Godhead; and I cannot but think a mind destitute of prejudice or prepossessions, would immediately perceive that, Logos, Word, Wisdom and fullness of the Godhead mean the same thing and are used to express that attribute of the Deity by which he is directed in all his works. God created all things by the Logos it is true; but must we infer from hence that the *man Christ Jesus* created all things? certainly not; for he had no personal existence till some thousand years after the worlds were made. An eternal principle dwelt in Christ, which St. John calls the word, and which the apostle calls the fullness of the Godhead; and it is, probably, to this principle that he himself alludes when he says, "It is not I that do the works; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." I think it will appear obvious from the above remarks that God created the universe by Wisdom; and that the *man Christ Jesus* had nothing to do with creation; and that he never existed till he was conceived by Mary.

2. It is said that Christ is called God by the inspired writers. Much stress has been laid on Isaiah ix. 6, "For unto us a child is born," &c. It is strange how any one, who had the least knowledge of the highly figurative language of the Orientals, should have imagined that this *verse* proved that Christ was the eternal Jehovah. If they had asked themselves, who should be called the everlasting Father, the answer would have been obvious:—a child. Would the prophet have insulted Jehovah by saying that he should be born, and by giving him the title of Prince, Counsellor, Wonderful, &c. and by calling him a CHILD? David says in the 82d Psalm; "I have said ye are gods;"—and Jesus says, "if they were called gods;" and the apostle, "there are gods many and lords many, but unto us there is one God and one Lord Jesus Christ."—Names do not alter things; and whatever Christ might have been called, it is plain that "he was tempted in all points as we are;" and that he was ignorant of the time when Jerusalem was to be destroyed; and that he ate and drank, slept and awoke, lived and died like other men, with the exception of error: guile not being found on his lips. Do you think that Jehovah was tempted as we are? Did he eat, drink, sleep and die? If Jehovah did not, and Jesus Christ did, then Jesus Christ is not Jehovah, whether he be called so or not. Moses said to the Jews, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up, like unto me." If Christ be Jehovah, how could Moses have the impudence to say he should be like him? Did he compare the Almighty to himself? Does this look like the meekness of Moses? I think not.

3. It is said that Christ is the object of religious worship. Religious worship does not consist in bodily exercise, nor in a mixture of awe and wonder; but in a spiritual communion of a soul with its Maker; and in a subordinate sense, with other objects of its affection and gratitude. We love, adore, or worship God supremely because he first loved us, and is the author of all our enjoyments; and we may love Christ with the same love, but not in the same degree. We are commanded to love our neighbor; but it is not idolatry to love him in a subordinate sense. If we do not love our brother whom we have seen: how can we love God whom we have not seen. We ought to love Christ as the immedi-

ate author, under God, of our holy religion; but Jehovah alone is worthy of our supreme adoration. I have thus briefly noticed the three propositions on which are grounded the principal arguments for the divinity of Christ; and if others cannot see as I do, I shall not condemn them as HERETICS.

As to the third person in the TRINITY, it appears to me to be nothing more or less than TRUTH, and the operation of the Divine energy or power. The latter seems to be meant in the 1st of Genesis where it is said that "the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters;" and in Luke i. 35, where it is said, "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee;" but the former is generally meant. TRUTH being a holy principle is very properly denominated the *Holy Spirit*, or *Spirit of God*. St. John explains this subject and places it beyond a doubt. See his first general Epistle: iv. 1, 2, 3, "Beloved believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God, (or God's Spirits) because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know we the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come: and even now is it in the world."—Those who confessed that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, were guided by the TRUTH, HOLY SPIRIT, OR SPIRIT OF GOD; and those who denied it were not of God, but were lying spirits, spirits of darkness or antichrist. I have thus given you my views of the doctrine of the TRINITY, which doctrine I verily think one of the most palpable absurdities ever invented by priests or believed by rational beings. The nature of this communication would not permit me to say more. It is a little over a year since I began to doubt its truth; soon after which I read with care, Elder Hedding's sermon on the divinity of Christ; which was published by the request of the N. E. Conference assembled at Bath, Me. 1822; and although I feel as much respect for his candor and abilities as I do for any man's living; and although I believe he has said all that can be said to prove that the Son is equal to the Father, and not only equal, but the Father himself; yet I must confess he has not removed my objections to the TRINITY. His sermon served to increase and confirm my doubts; and I cannot think it can satisfy any candid inquirer after TRUTH, whose mind is not blinded by early prejudices. The doctrine of the TRINITY is acknowledged on all hands to be an incomprehensible mystery; and it is certain that it is contrary to every thing we see in nature, and can only be supported by a few ambiguous texts of scripture, in opposition to a multitude that are plain and explicit. God is expressly called Love, Power, &c. and by the same rule that wisdom is made a separate person, all his attributes might be; and then we should have as many persons in the Godhead as the Deity has attributes. Moses said, "the Lord your God is one God," but if he had been a Trinitarian, he would have said, the Lord your God, the Father, Son and holy Ghost, is one God. I cannot close without observing that you place too much emphasis on the word TRINITY, for if a man will but believe it in any form it will answer the purpose, and take away the reproach of infidelity. I think I shall be able in my next to close my objections to your creed.

Yours in love,

E. CASE.

APHORISMS.

The profane swearer sins for nothing, upon no temptation, for no credit; unless it be a credit, not to be believed.

It is better for us that there should be difference of judgment, if we keep charity; but it is most unmanly to quarrel, because we differ.

Though the speaker be a fool, the hearer should be a wise man.

COMMUNICATIONS.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

Attleborough, August 27th 1823.

MR. EDITOR.—The following circumstance that lately occurred in this vicinity, not only shows the bitter spirit of persecution, but also the shameful abuse in which it is willing to indulge. An Universalist Minister received an invitation to preach in this neighborhood on the fourth sabbath of the present month, and Universalism being a new thing in this place, much opposition was manifested to his preaching here, especially, on the part of what is called the *Freewill Baptists*, and every possible means used to prevent the people from attending.

A young lady, who boarded with a *pious* woman who is of the *Freewill Baptist* persuasion, expressed a desire to go and hear what the Universalist preacher had to say, but was peremptorily told that if she went to the Universalist meeting, she must seek another boarding place, for she would not board any person that would go to that meeting.—The young lady, however, attended meeting, thereby manifesting a determination to hear and judge for herself in matters of religion, although at the expense of being turned out of doors. The *pious* lady remained true to her word, and actually refused her admission into the house.

Anciently, those who dared to reject the creeds of men, and embrace the gospel were "turned out of the Synagogue,"—at the present day they are turned out of doors.—"Common sense how art thou lost in the thick cloud of bigotry, superstition and fanatism!"

B. & F.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

"At Saugur-Island, formerly, mothers were seen casting their living offspring among a number of alligators, and standing to gaze at these monsters quarrelling for their prey, beholding the writhing infant in the jaws of the successful animal, and standing motionless while it was breaking the bones, and sucking the blood of the poor innocent! What must be that *superstition* which can thus transform a being, whose distinguishing quality is *tenderness*, into a monster more *unnatural* than the tiger prowling through the forest for its prey."—*Ward's Letters*, page 79.

If human nature is *totally depraved*, this conduct of the mother is perfectly *NATURAL*. If it is *not*, dreadful indeed must be that *superstition* which can produce such effects. "Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" is a question which calls all the tender sympathies of human nature into exertion. What mother, with this question before her, does not answer in the negative—while the tear of affection trembles in her eye? What mother, whose softer nature has not been led astray by the doctrine of devils, does not, in agony, strain the infant to her beating bosom, while the bare possibility of thus neglecting her charge disturbs not merely the tender sensibilities of her nature, but her reason also.

But what says the word of *inspiration*—"yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Facts, dreadful as they are, prove, that pagan mothers *do* forget—that the veil of superstition has closed their eyes to the bonds of maternal duty; and that a "deceived heart" hath turned them aside from the first, the tenderest sympathies of our nature. But has this unhallowed superstition reached no further? have not mothers called Christians, been so far under the influence of a false religion, or rather priest craft, as to be the executioners of their own children—that, dying while young, they might escape an *eternity* of misery! Surely the ghosts of Mrs. Stone's three children witness this dreadful delusion, nor are they alone the victims of that baleful

doctrine which claims the palm of orthodoxy. Happy indeed it is for the community, that this system of doctrine almost universally "plays around the head but comes not to the heart," while such are the dreadful consequences of a sincere belief in its truth.

But why lament this superstition—are we not taught "that in a future state the elect will shout a loud amen to the sentence of inexpressible and interminable woe, which will be pronounced on the reprobate—to whom by the incomprehensible but yet irreprehensible decree of God, the entry into life is blocked up?" These heathen mothers are only in advance of the perfection of the elect in christendom—they merely habituate themselves to these scenes of *momentary suffering*, as a preparatory step to that species of perfection which lies in prospect before those who declare that parents and children—husbands and wives—ministers and people—and all the tenderest relations in society shall be separated; and the benevolence of the christian heart be changed for the diabolical feelings which are above expressed. Is it not, my christian fellows, giving us a "sorry heaven, at an unreasonable price." May God in mercy grant us wisdom to pull the beam from our own eye, that we may see clearly to pull the mote from our brothers eye, and before we send missionaries to teach others humanity and religion, learn to practice "the precepts of Jesus."

MILO.

RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

SATURDAY, September 20, 1823.

KNEELAND'S TESTAMENT.—We have examined a copy of this work in Greek and English on opposite columns, and can recommend it as worthy of the attention not only of the curious and the critical scholar, but of the common reader, and of all inquirers after truth. Mr. K. has availed himself of the labours of most of the learned men who have exerted themselves to correct the text and give an improved and accurate translation of the sacred scriptures. He has bestowed two years labour on the work himself and made farther improvements. Where the translation differs from the common version, it is printed in italics so as to be distinguished. The alterations in many verses are important as it respects the sense and even in relation to doctrine. The price is reasonable, Mr. K. expecting only to remunerate himself for his expences and making no calculation as to compensation for his own labours,—not at least from the present edition of the work.—We recommend it to the public.

Locke's Opinion of Orthodoxy.

There is nothing more ridiculous than for a man, or company of men, to assume the title of orthodoxy to their own set of opinions, as if infallibility were annexed to their systems, and those were to be the standing measures of Truth to all the world: from whence they erect to themselves a power to censure and condemn others for differing at all from the tenets they have pitched upon. The consideration of human frailty ought to check this vanity; but since it does not, but that with a sort of allowance it shows itself almost in all religious societies, the playing the trick round sufficiently turns it into ridicule; for each society having an equal right to a good opinion of themselves, a man, by passing but a river or a hill, loses that orthodoxy in one company, which puffed him up with such assurance and insolence in another, and is there, with equal justice, himself exposed to the like censures of error and heresy, which he was so forward to lay on others

at home. When it shall appear, that infallibility is entailed upon any one set of men of any denomination, or that Truth is confined to any spot of ground, the name, and use of Orthodoxy, as it is now in fashion every where, will in that one place be reasonable. Till then, this ridiculous cant will be a foundation too weak to sustain that usurpation that is raised upon it.—*Locke's Second Viudication.*

From the Unitarian Miscellany.

FALLACIOUSNESS OF HUMAN HOPES.

The world in which we live is a perpetual scene of change. As a bright morning is often succeeded by a dark and tempestuous day, so the most promising worldly prospects are liable to be suddenly clouded by the gloom and cheerlessness of affliction. But notwithstanding this truth is attested by the voice of universal experience, we still form our purposes and lay our plans with as much confidence, as if the calamities of life could never reach us. When we are young, we look forward to the period of manhood, and form a multitude of plans for more advanced life, without hardly dreaming, that they may never be realized. The man who has advanced to mature life, and even the grey headed veteran, whose life is near its end, practises the same delusion. But every thing teaches us how visionary are human expectations. This truth is proclaimed from a thousand scenes of worldly disappointments, from the bed of disease, and the lips of the dying, and is inscribed in legible, gloomy characters over the gates of the grave.

The hopes which men form with respect to the present life, are various and often very sanguine. Some of them relate to those things, which are in themselves desirable, while others pertain to objects and purposes, which are sinful and dangerous. Some of them are altogether unreasonable in themselves, and are contradicted by universal experience, while others seem to be warranted in some degree, by the order of providence. It is natural that we should hope for the enjoyment of health, for the affection of friends, for an exemption from adversity, for a comfortable share of the bounties of providence, for long life, and for a serene and tranquil old age. It is natural for the good man to hope to be useful; to have his lot so arranged by providence, that he may be instrumental in doing the greatest good to his fellow men; to see virtue and piety flourishing around him, and the church growing in numbers and purity. But how often are all these hopes suddenly, and to the eye of man, prematurely blasted. How often are the hopes of the robust and vigorous man destroyed by sickness; the hopes of the man, whose heart is set upon the world, destroyed by the sudden or gradual inroads of poverty; the hopes of the man, who was surrounded by a family whom he loved, destroyed by death; the hopes of the christian, whose affections are all given to the service of his God, destroyed by the general prevalence of vice and irreligion. And these hopes are often blighted suddenly and with little premonition. The brightest sun of worldly prosperity that ever shone, may in one sad hour disappear from our view, and with respect to us, may hide itself forever amidst the clouds and tempests of affliction.

We have seen the young man of promise coming forward into life, under circumstances peculiarly auspicious. He is blest with an ingenuous temper, with an active mind, and a benevolent heart. His friends and the community look forward to the day, when he will be actively engaged in doing good, and will be hailed as the ornament and pride of some useful profession. But before he has commenced his career, and while the eyes of all are fixed upon him in anxious expectation, he sickens and dies. His own bright hopes are blasted; his friends and the public mingle their tears at the common loss. Had he lived, they

are ready to say, he might have reformed the disorders of the state, or he might have converted many souls to righteousness, or he might have shed a benign and salutary influence through every department of society, which his example or exertions could reach.

Or it may be, that this young man, whose opening prospects appeared so bright, has fallen into habits of vice. He may have formed some unhappy connexions, or been placed in circumstances of peculiar temptation; and he may have thrown off the restraints of a good education, and gradually become a scourge to the society in which he moves. Instead of realizing the hopes, which we had formed, and of seeing the world benefitted by his example and influence, we shrink from his company, and guard our children from it, as we would from a deadly contagion. How many hopes were centred in this promising youth, and how many hearts bleed on account of his miserable end.

You are a husband, or a wife, and have set out in the world with the fairest prospects of domestic enjoyments. Your hearts have been bound together by a tie, the strength and tenderness of which you had never realized, till you had been taught it by experience. You had formed a thousand plans, in which you were mutually interested, and had looked forward with joyful and sanguine hope to their consummation. But the experience of a few months, or years perhaps, has proved all this a delusion. A most disastrous change, in the very morning of domestic life, has broken up all your plans, and disappointed all your hopes. If you are a husband, you may have seen your wife sink into the grave, and leave you in solitude and grief; or if you are a wife, you may have watched around the dying bed of your husband, may have wiped from his face the cold damps of death, may have received his last look, or heard him falter out his last expression of tenderness on this side of eternity; and you may be left with a little group of helpless orphans, in whom you can trace the image of their departed father, and whose happiness and usefulness in life, under God, seemed greatly to depend upon a father's care. Oh what a destruction of fond and interesting hopes is here! Well may the weeping husband or wife look up to God from such a scene of desolation, and exclaim, "Thou destroyest the hope of man."

You are a father, or a mother, and have watched the little object of your affection with the strongest feelings of parental tenderness. It has insensibly entwined itself with all your affections, and purposes, and hopes. You become interested in its little sports; you look forward to the time when it shall reach the maturity of life, and perhaps be the staff of your declining years. It had hardly occurred to you, that it was a tender shoot, which one untimely frost might blast forever. But what has experience taught you? It has proved, that all these fond expectations were visionary; and that this blessing, which you valued so much, was held by a thread so brittle, that it could hardly withstand the pressure of an atom. In an unexpected hour, you have seen it falling under the power of disease, and perhaps even before your fears were awake, it has been still and lifeless in the arms of death. Is not here, too, a destruction of interesting hopes? Let the bleeding heart of the mother, and the agonized bosom of the father, return and answer.

One reflection, which is very obviously suggested by the preceding remarks, is, that we should learn to recognise the hand of God in the destruction of our hopes. Because sickness, and death, and afflictions, for the most part happen according to a common law of providence, we are too much inclined to overlook the direction and agency of God altogether. But such conduct is totally inconsistent with a right use of afflictions.

I need not tell the Christian, that there is no other refuge amidst the dark and disastrous scenes of life, but in

the providence and faithfulness of God. You may well afford to see your worldly plans defeated, and your worldly hopes blasted, if you can exercise the confidence of a child in the government of God, and can feel an assurance, that you shall know the reasons of all his mysterious dispensations at last.

From the (Boston) Universalist Magazine.

HELL.

As it is contended, by religious people in general, that a firm belief in a place or a state, in the future world, of the most excruciating torment, called HELL, is absolutely necessary, not only to constitute one a christian, but to form an acceptable character for piety and sound morals, I am desirous of suggesting some queries respecting what will constitute this torment.—It is true, that a vague, superstitious notion of some horrible sufferings may create a momentary gloom in the mind; but in all cases where real moral principles are concerned, it seems clear, to me, that some definite ideas should, in a distinct manner, occupy the understanding. Brutes may be frightened by strange appearances, and by such means we can drive them in a violent, but not in an orderly manner from us, precipitately; but by such means we never attempt to induce them to come to us. This remark is designed to lead the mind to realize that our object to be accomplished should be distinctly understood, and then that the means by which our end is to be effected, should be compatible with such an object.

All christian people agree that real christianity is love to our Creator, faith in Christ, hope in eternal life, and good will to all men. Now there seems to exist an insurmountable difficulty in understanding how a belief, that our Father in heaven has ordained such dreadful sufferings, in the invisible world, for his rational offspring, should induce us to love him, believe Christ, hope in eternal life, and to love mankind. But this difficulty is not the subject of our present queries. What we are now in pursuit of is, what is it which constitutes this indistinguishable suffering, which people call HELL?

No doubt there are two answers to this question; for some believe that HELL is a place of literal fire and brimstone, where the wicked will suffer, soul and body, by being burned in perpetual flames. Others think that the scripture language, where fire and brimstone are named, should be understood figuratively, and to signify the compunctions of an accusing conscience.

Let us now inquire after the rationality of these answers. If HELL be literal fire and brimstone how can that torment unless it can consume? And if it consumes, its torments will soon come to an end! Here then we obtain no distinct idea. If we allow the other notion, then the question occurs, how can compunctions of conscience become so very intolerable? It is said that the wicked in HELL will hate God, will blaspheme his name, will hate all goodness, &c. &c. How then is it possible that conscience should so shockingly accuse and torment? This is certainly absurd! The accusations of conscience give no mental trouble without producing a detestation of wrong; and this can never exceed the regard which the heart feels towards the law of right, which has been violated.

If some one, who can, will explain these matters, and point out this HELL so that we can have some distinct idea of its nature and its great utility, he will oblige

H. B.

From the same.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

to be committed to memory by the believers in endless torment.

Quest. Who erected the holy Inquisition, and sacrificed

on its altar hoary age, and innocent youth, the virtuous man and innocent female?

Ans. The pious believers in endless torture.

Quest. Who traversed a considerable part of Africa and Asia, and even some parts of Europe, spreading death and desolation in their way, in order to propagate their religion?

Ans. The Mahometan believers in endless misery.

Quest. Who destroyed the lives of millions and millions of the innocent natives of the West-India Islands, and South America; and tore from their homes, tender connatural friends, millions and millions more of the unoffending sons and daughters of unfortunate Africa, and doomed them to wear the chains of an ignominious slavery for life?

Ans. The Christian believers in a death that never dies!!

Quest. Who beheaded the unfortunate Charles, king of England; and Mary, queen of Scots?

Ans. The pious protestant believers in an endless hell.

Quest. Who murdered the unfortunate French monarch Louis xvi?

Ans. The believers in no religion.

Quest. Which is the worst, no religion or the doctrine of endless torture?

Ans. The doctrine of endless torture.

Quest. Who have laid cities in ashes, countries in waste, and dyed the ocean with blood, and covered the mountains and vallies of the four quarters of the globe with human gore, filling the earth with violence?

Ans. The believers in unlimited torture.

Quest. Who now say that the doctrine, which teaches the final "restoration," and "reconciliation of all things to God," is the doctrine of the devil; and that those who preach it, are the devil's agents, and "speak" all manner of evil against them "falsely?"

Ans. The modern Christian, pious, charitable believers in endless torment, who compass sea and land to make proselytes.
E. C.

From the (N. Y.) Gospel Herald.

ANECDOTE.

The Soldier and the Virgin Mary.

During the Peninsular war, a strong detachment from the French army occupied one of the principal cities in the interior of Spain. The Spaniards have long been celebrated for their blind and superstitious adoration of the *Virgin Mary*. The inhabitants of this place, in particular, were noted for their many statues, dedicated to her in all their churches. The cathedral exceeded all others in the size of the image, the splendor of the robes, the jewels and precious stones, the votive offerings of misguided zeal. Every part of the image was studded with diamonds and adorned with gold. A French soldier was noted for his devotions, his constant and unremitting attention at the earliest and latest mass. He was one day accidentally left alone in the church, after the first mass had concluded, by the priest and sexton. He immediately seized the opportunity of converting the jewels of the sacred image to his own use, and so completely did he strip her, that when the monks returned they found her hands and feet broken off, her eyes dug out, and not the value of a single sou left.

This horrid and impious sacrilege aroused all the vengeance of the offended church. Immense rewards were offered, and every means were used to discover the offender. They at length succeeded in proving that this soldier was the only person who had committed the crime. A deputation immediately waited upon the commander in chief, requesting this culprit to be delivered over to the secular power. General N—, who was one of the illuminati of France, and possessed of liberal principles, refused to deliver this man to an enraged rabble, who would undoubtedly put him to death without the shadow of a trial. He replied, that he would try the soldier by a military and

ecclesiastical tribunal, would decide the cause himself, and if he was proved guilty, he would then, without hesitation, surrender him; and appointed the next week for the hearing of the cause. This proceeding was by no means pleasant to the irritated Catholics, but they had no remedy but patience. On the appointed day, all the clergy of the city, and every adjacent place assembled in crowds, the court was filled with monks, friars, priests, bishops, archbishops, and even the Pope's legate, who happened to be there at the time, appeared among the ecclesiastics. The populace, also, eager to witness the punishment of so audacious a heretic, and ready to sacrifice him, surrounded the place in crowds. But the General had taken the precaution to surround himself and the prisoner with a strong detachment. A reverend priest addressed the court, and descended at large upon the enormity of the offence; he represented to them the *holy mother of God* as insulted, ill-treated, and sacrilegiously violated; and finally wound them up to the highest pitch of fury against the devoted offender. His oration was received by the bigoted enthusiasts with thunders of applause, and imprecations of vengeance; already they saw him tied to the stake and expiring in tortures at an *Auto da fe*. But the judge, cool, collected, and temperate, turning round to the man, asked him, You have heard the charge, what is your defence? That I have taken the jewels and diamonds from the Holy Virgin's Statue, I admit; but I positively deny that I *robbed* her of them. As I was praying to her, and begging her interposition in my behalf, as a poor and *needy* soldier, with a family of six children and nothing but my scanty pittance to support them, I suddenly heard a voice from the statue exclaim—"The Holy Virgin has heard your prayers, she has seen your devotion, and pities your lot. Take these jewels and other ornaments which the piety of my worshippers have presented me with, and relieve your necessities. I am a *poor* *girl*, and need them not. My faithful followers will soon replace them, and you will be rescued from want and misery." Astonished at this heavenly voice, and not daring to disobey it, I converted them to my own use, and blessed the friendly interposition of our blessed Virgin.

Abominable liar! audacious wretch! exclaimed the assembly. The judge ordered silence, and turning to the priests of the cathedral, thus addressed them—Was any one present at this time? No one, replied they. Do you believe it possible, according to your articles of faith, that the Virgin has power to convey her will in an audible manner, and to animate an image? This was a question involving the miraculous power and sanctity of the Holy mother; and to deny it, would at once overthrow her power and reduce her to the level of a mere mortal. They therefore, with some hesitation, answered, that it was not only possible, but had frequently happened. Then I decree, as the man swears that the Sacred Virgin gave these things to him, and you cannot disprove his assertion, that the man is hereby acquitted of the charge; but, addressing himself to the soldier, if you hereafter accept any present, unless before witnesses, from any saint or apostle, even if from the holy St. Paul himself, I will instantly hang you.

W. J.

BLESSED EFFECTS OF MISSIONARIES.

The Philadelphia Religious Remembrancer contains an extract from a journal of a missionary in India, giving an account of a "mutiny of women against the missionaries." It appears the women remonstrated with the king, against allowing the missionaries to remain in the country, &c.—"Four of the principal women were put to death with the soldier's bayonets." The king of course, was thanked! For the missionary says, "We thanked him for his gracious promises of regard and protection!" Is it the religion of *China*, or of Jesus, that produces this bloodshed? If the

spirit of Christ had been there, we think, a different result would have happened.

☞ The same paper gives an account of Calvinism raining from the clouds, as follows:

"It was during the early part of Sept. 1822, that appearances in *Westfield* indicated a shower of grace. There was indeed a sprinkling, and a few we hope, were saved, but the heavenly cloud passed along northwardly and stood over *Southampton*, raining righteousness upon that highly favoured people, and with such power that it was indeed a season when Zion's gates were crowded with trembling and anxious, and rejoicing souls. The work continued in this place in its greatest power through the autumn and winter."

The moderns are certainly wonderful in description. We fear the cloud rained from beneath, instead of from above. The use made of natural things as figures, in the Scriptures, are inclusive of God's purpose toward all, and not to a few bigoted sectarians.—*Gospel Herald*.

PRACTICAL HINT.

I will take the liberty to recommend to your readers a religious practice, which I adopted many years ago, and from which I have derived much comfort and edification. It need not consume any time, nor interrupt any business.—It is this; every morning, I select a short passage from the word of God, and in one or two minutes commit it well to memory. This is my text for the day; and when I am at leisure, I think of it, and as I always select a practical text, I always make the three following inquiries—what does it mean? what duties does it enjoin? and how do I perform them? The following is a specimen for one week.

Sabbath morning. "GOD is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." Monday. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?" Tuesday. "If any man say he loveth God and hateth his brother, he is a liar." Wednesday. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Thursday. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Friday. "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." Saturday. "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the son of man cometh."

Liberal Recorder.

GNASHING OF TEETH.

When the apostles testified of Christ, and his salvation, unbelievers gnashed upon them with their teeth. And when their irrefutable arguments destroyed the contradictory premises of their opponents, they attempted to achieve by tumultuous uproars, what they could not effect by arguments and common sense. This is the case in our day. Men who deal in misrepresentation and falsehood, infuse their spirit into their adherents, and gnashing of teeth, tumult and uproar is the consequence.

Much as this spirit of discord and malevolence is to be lamented, (for it is the very spirit of the Devil,) it should never deter the believer in Christ from the faithful discharge of his duty. The immediate disciples and apostles of our Saviour were stoned—beaten—imprisoned—and, finally, put to death! We, Heaven be praised, fare better. Our enemies only wish us evil, gnash upon us with their teeth,—and give vent to their spirit by hard words, and occasionally, hoot and hiss a little. For this expression of kindness we really pity them. They must feel very disagreeable, and suffer much from the fire which internally preys upon their vitals, and bursting, like a volcano, makes even their breath a flame of Hell!

They forcibly remind us of the ancient Pharisees, who would not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven themselves, nor suffer others to go in.

The candid man, who is in search of truth, and possesses

even in a small degree, a desire for his neighbours' welfare, will always make a proper distinction between *noise* and *argument*,—between *truth* and *misrepresentation*. For ourselves, much as we lament this untoward and wicked spirit, we are determined to move steadily on. These things may cause difficulty, but they will not prove obstructions. Words are but wind,—and our opponents, with all their zeal, unless accompanied with *knowledge*, will never effect any thing but the pulling down of their own Babel. When we are assailed with *stones*, instead of *hard* speeches, and, instead of being threatened, are actually assailed with violence,—when we are burned with *material* fire, then, and not till then, should we be justified in sheltering ourselves behind the rampart of inaction, and seeking safety in fear. Our opposers little think, that pity is the only emotion which their rage excites. Or, that we commiserate their sufferings. For we know that they cannot injure us; and they know, that their malevolent expressions and wishes *torment* them in their birth!—*Gospel Herald*.

QUERE.

The Scriptures represent the Devil as a destroyer, and pleased with misery. Is there not a very great similarity between the great adversary of man, and those in our day, who wax wrath at the idea of all men being saved, and melt into *sighs* and *smiles*, at the prospect of their neighbour's misery? We mean no offence. But we are forcibly struck with the likeness.—*ib*.

DIED.

At Berlin, on the 31st ult. MRS. EUNICE HART, wife of Mr. Freedom Hart, in the 23th year of her age. By this death her husband has lost an affectionate companion and wife, and her connexions a dutiful child, and beloved sister. She has gone we trust to that home where all will meet to part no more.

At Hardwick, (Ms.) on the 17th ult. MRS. LUTHERA CUTLER, wife of Samuel F. Cutler, and daughter of Daniel Ruggles, Esq. aged 25. Amiable, kind and equable, she united most of the virtues that adorn the female character, all of which were heightened and improved by sound and rational piety, the seat of which is the heart and the understanding—short as was her life, it has added another to the many examples of the happy influence of that faith in the goodness of God, which purifies the heart, chastens the affections and fills the soul with a diffusive benevolence, which like a spring of living water, is a source of never failing joy in life and of hope and consolation in death. Although cut off in the morning of life, and amidst the brightest prospects of a cloudless day, she met her fate, undismayed and with resignation, and triumphed over the last enemy, by the sustaining influence of that hope, which an unshaken confidence in the illimitable goodness of God alone can inspire.—*Communicated*.

NOTICE.

☐ The second Volume of the Religious Inquirer being nearly brought to a close, the agents for the paper are requested to collect and forward the money that remains due, and subscribers who are in arrears, where there are no agents, are requested immediately to forward payment. In complying with this request, agents and subscribers will confer a favor on the publishers.

NOTICE.

All persons to whom proposals were sent for publishing Mr. Bellour's work, are requested to return them immediately, to Mr. S. Ethridge the publisher, Charlestown, who intends putting it to the press according to agreement.—Printers favorable to the work, will confer a favor, by giving this notice an insertion.

POETRY.

SELECTED.

RULES FOR LONG LIFE.

THE following energetic lines are by Thomas Randolph, a poet who wrote with considerable reputation near the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Take thou no care how to defer thy death,
And give more respite to this mortal breath.
Would'st thou live long? the only means are these,
'Bove Galen's diet, or Hippocrates'.
Strive to live well; tread in the upright ways;
And rather count thy actions than thy days.
Then thou hast lived enough amongst us here,
For every day well spent I count a year,
Live well; and then, how soon so'er thou die,
Thou art of age to claim eternity.
But he that outlives Nestor, and appears
To have past the date of grave Methuselah's years,
If he his life to sloth and sin doth give,
I say he only *was*, he did not *live*.

THE LIGHT-HOUSE

The scene was more beautiful far to my eye,
Than if day in its pride had array'd it,
The land breeze blew mild, and the azure arch'd sky
Look'd pure as the Spirit that made it:
The murmur rose soft as I silently gaz'd
In the shadowy waves' playful motion,
From the dim distant hill, 'till the Light-house fire
blaz'd
Like a star in the midst of the ocean.

No longer the joy of the sailor boy's breast
Was heard in his wildly breath'd numbers,
The sea-bird had flown to her wave girdled nest,
The fisherman sunk to his slumbers:
One moment I look'd from the hill's gentle slope,
All hush'd was the billows' commotion,
And tho't that the Light-house look'd lovely as hope,
That star of life's tremulous ocean.

The time is long past, and the scene is afar,
Yet when my head rests on its pillow,
Will memory sometimes rekindle the star
That blaz'd on the breast of the billow:
In life's closing hour, when the trembling soul flies,
And death stills the heart's last emotion;
O then may the seraph of mercy arise,
Like a star on eternity's ocean.

NEW PUBLICATION.

Just received, and for sale at this Office.

A NEW Edition of Griesbach, price *three dollars*.—The Greek & English Testament, (2 vols.) price *four dollars*. The New Testament; being the English only of the Greek and English Testament; translated from the original Greek according to Griesbach; upon the basis of the 4th London edition of the improved Version, with an attempt to further improvement from the translations of Campbell, Wakefield, Scarlett, Macknight, and Thompson.—By ABNER KNEELAND, Minister of the First Independent Church of Christ, called Universalist, in Philadelphia.—Price one dollar and fifty cents.

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